FOREWORD

In a prediction made in 1924 regarding the applicability of the spirit of Henry James to 'our future/ T. S. Eliot had observed :

> Henry James is an author who is difficult for English readers because he is an American; and who is difficult for Americans, because he is a European; and I do not know whether he is possible to other readers at all. On the other hand, the exceptionally sensitive reader, who is neither English nor American, may have a position of detachment which is an advantage.

Dr. Krishna Rao's book on James is to be welcomed as a proof of the advantage mentioned by Eliot and also as a testimony to the recant growing interest Indian scholars have been taking in Jamesian fiction. Having wooed too long the courtly muses of Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau (partly for their obvious Indological connections), Indian scholarship has lately turned its attention to Henry James and his contemporaries in American Literature. This marks a shift in the Indian critical preoccupations from the panoramic to the scenic, from the mythic past to the lively present, from grand assertion to dramatic tension. In the euphoria of an Indian Renaissance, we had believed mat the masters of the Arrerican Renaissance offered us a world-view that reflected our own at the time. But since Independence, we have become more self-searching and self-critical; Hawthorne, Melville, Mark Twain and Henry James seem to be more relevant to our sense of things.

A special reason why James fascinates us is that his 'passage to India' is a product of our own transitional consciousness. The point of visionary mediation occupied by his fictional world in the transatlantic setting has an analogue in our own system of self-reference. James's treatment of the two cultures puts our own East-West encounter in a meaningful and vital perspective. His

thematic
preoccupation with the tension between manners and morals, between
cultural innocence and experience and between self and society seems
to coincide with the modem Indian-writer's concern with such matters.
Also his 'transcendent humanism* seems to sum up an attitude which
might well nigh be ours in relation to our past inheritance and our
present predicament. The lesson cf the master is a creative reinforce-
ment of the ideal of human integrity pitted against the sirens of a